

Serve and Give
The Path To Greatness
 Mark 10: 32-45
 May 17, 2026
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³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³ saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸ Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

How would you live if you *knew* when you were going to die?

A well-known New York Times journalist, recently asked Ben Sasse, a former Senator from Nebraska, in an interview. Ben Sasse was recently diagnosed with stage IV cancer. Ben said he has only a few months to live. Ben Sasse is a Christian. Ben Sasse quoted from Philippians 1:21 “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” in one interview.

Last week we saw the rich young ruler, who came to Jesus and wanted eternal life. Yet, when our Lord Jesus Christ told him to go, sell, give his wealth to the poor and follow him, he was disheartened. Why? Because his possessions or his riches were his life. Not Christ.

So, if Christ is not the Lord of your life, then you don’t have eternal life. Either you have

all of Jesus or none of Jesus. If you call Jesus, ‘Lord’, you know what it implies? It means you are his *slave*. Someone who has given up his or her self-agenda and has come under the authority, the dominion, and the reign of Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus told his disciples, “*Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I tell you?*” Luke 6:46. In Luke 17:10, Jesus teaches his disciples that – “*So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants (slaves); we have only done what was our duty.’*” Duty is connected with that we owe God. Everything!

So, last week, we saw Jesus teaching his disciples that entry into eternal life will be *preceded* by many blessings and trials, suffering and even persecution. When we look at the lives of the apostles and the early followers of Jesus, what do we observe? Witnessing for Christ, Service, Martyrdom and Glory.

And here, at this point in the disciples’ journey with our Lord Jesus Christ, they have still not matured in their understanding. In the previous passages, we saw that our Lord taught them about marriage and about the impossibility of salvation by man. Both times they were rather shocked, amazed, and astounded by the teaching of our Lord. But today in our passage, the disciples appear to be rather ignorant and lacking understanding about Jesus’s journey to the cross. Instead, two of the disciples make demands of our Lord.

Look at verses, 32 through 34.

³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³ saying, “*See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.*”

Jesus is on the road. He is going up to Jerusalem. The twelve disciples were following him and were amazed at what he taught. Others were afraid in awe of him. And then Jesus makes an announcement. What’s the announcement? Jesus uses the word “See” in verse 33 to make his announcement. “See” is the word “Behold” – meaning, “Pay attention”. The Gospel of Luke 18:31 has a little more detail about his trip to Jerusalem. It says “*everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished*”.

The Son of Man is self-referencing title that Jesus used of himself. You might ask which Old Testament Prophet wrote about Jesus?

Many Prophets wrote about Jesus but there are at least four Prophetical writings:

1. Psalm 22 is one prophecy. Here is what was written about Jesus “*But I am a worm*

and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads” Psalm 22:6-7

2. Psalm 69 another prophecy. Verse 20 says *“Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.”*
3. Daniel 9:26 tells us that *“an Anointed One shall be cut off and shall have nothing”*.
4. Isaiah 53 is one of the clearest of prophetic writings about Jesus’s crucifixion and death. *“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”* Isaiah 53:3

So, Jesus announces about his death and resurrection to his disciples for the third time. We see a similar announcement in Mark 8: 31, and Mark 9: 31 that he would be mocked, spat upon, flogged, killed and on the third day rise from the dead.

What did Jesus do that he has to undergo such humiliation at the hands of others?
Nothing!

So far, we have seen in the Gospel of Mark that all the Jesus did was heal the sick, forgive the penitent, raise the dead, touch the lepers, provide for the hungry, calm the raging sea and much more. All he did was do good deeds. His internal life was sinless spotless. If there was ever an innocent man Jesus would be the model for others to imitate. And yet Jesus announces to his disciples that he must undergo this brutal treatment from others.

Why? You cannot understand what Jesus says here apart knowing that sin deserves a penalty. We can never understand the suffering of Christ if we don’t understand sin and its consequences.

It was I who deserved the mocking, the spitting, the flogging and death because sin offends God. The wages of sin is death. And yet even if I took all the mocking, all the spitting, all the flogging none of those things can ever cleanse me of my darkest stain of sin. Jeremiah 2:22 says that *“Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me”*. So, you can do all the good deeds, you can perform all kinds of severe asceticism on your body, punish your body, and yet your sin not be cleared before God. What God desires is a broken and contrite spirit.

And you would think that the disciples understood what Jesus said when he talked to them about his impending crucifixion and death. This is rather astonishing. Look at the gospel of Luke 18:34.

“But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said” Luke 18:34

Jesus announces that he was going to die and be raised. And the disciples are clueless. However, what do they ask of Jesus instead?

Look at Verses 35 through 37.

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “*What do you want me to do for you?*” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that it was the mother of James and John who asked Jesus these things. Regardless of the variation in detail, you see the request from this mother, or the disciples. “*She said to him, ‘Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.’*” Matthew 20:21

Jesus announces that he is going to die a horrible death and all this mother or these two men want is the best seats in heaven?

How outrageous and callous!

But you see how good our Lord Jesus Christ is. He knows their hearts. These disciples need some maturing. They need guidance. Jesus loves them. Jesus cares for them. Jesus has not given up on them. Remember the last time when Jesus said he would go to the cross in Mark 8:31? Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him. That did not end well with Peter did it? Jesus called Peter “Satan”. Rebuke does more good than flattery.

So, Jesus offers a gentle correction in his response to the request of James and John.

Verses 37 through 41.

³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸ Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.

- What does Jesus mean when he says if they are able to drink from the cup he drinks from and be baptized? Both those phrases mean the same thing more or less. Jesus means that they will suffer too, and that they will be persecuted the gospel’s sake.
- The disciple’s suffering is not substitutionary or vicarious like Jesus’ but they are evidences of true discipleship. (Philippians 1:29).
- Unlike the rich young ruler who wanted eternal life, who rejected the call to

discipleship, the disciples of Jesus are on their way to eternal life. And their path to eternal life will include many blessings and suffering for the Gospel's sake.

- And Jesus tells James and John that the sitting at his right hand or left is for those whom it has been prepared by His Father. Jesus gives deference and submits to His Father for such high demands. And of course, the rest of disciples are angry to such attitudes and demands. Who wouldn't be?

And what follows is Jesus teaching again.

Verses 42 through 45 are the most important part of this passage:

⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Jesus does not dismiss their desire for greatness, but he tells them if they want to be great, they must not be like the lords of the Gentiles, who want to exercise lordship, exercise authority, and domineer. Rather, they ought to start by first serving and giving. Serving whom? Each other. And giving themselves to each other to build up each other.
- You see Jesus flips the script on how his disciples should live in contrast to the world's system. His disciples are not to be the way the world operates. This world operates in lies, coercion, oppression, narcissism, and domineering. The people who supposedly rule feel better and greater than others, at the expense of others.
- Jesus uses two words in verse 43 and 44 to show how his disciples ought to be. What are these two words? Servant and slave. The word servant is the word *diakonos* (we get the word *deacon* from this word) and the word slave is the word *doulos* meaning a bond-servant. You want to be great? Start serving. Be a slave of Jesus Christ.
- Why? Jesus tells us in verse 45. Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to *serve* and *give* his life as a ransom for many. As a substitute for many. Jesus gave up his soul. His everything. He poured his soul for the life of others.
- Serve and give because even Jesus came not to be served but to serve and give!

Do you want to be great for yourself, making much of yourself and use Jesus for your own greatness or do you want Jesus to be great? John the Baptist decreased that Christ may increase.

I realize no one has the purest motives as Jesus. But when you become a disciple of Jesus, the self becomes less and less prominent and Jesus becomes more and more dear. Is that true of you? Can those who are closest to you say Jesus has become dearer and lovelier to you over the years?

Does the mocking, the spitting, the flogging, the humiliation of Christ affect your conscience? Does the cross of Christ move you?

Does the love of God stir you to serve and give?

Has the love of God captured you?

What will you give to God?

Let us serve and give!

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Serve and Give. Mark 10:32-45

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What do you understand about the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ that the disciples could not understand in this passage? What did they lack and what were they looking for instead? Acts 2:22-24, 2 Corinthians 7:10
2. HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.
 - Do you believe Christ is worth following even if it means loss in this life? Why or why not? Luke 19:6-8, Hebrews 11:24-26, 1 Corinthians 2:9
 - What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

3. HEART For personal reflection: What will you change in order to serve and give for Jesus?